



Southeast News

a publication of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ
Spring '98

Part of the Family

One of the great joys of my work with the Southeast Conference is that I have the opportunity to travel often and meet a variety of people. In January, I led a women's retreat at Plymouth Congregational Church in Charleston, SC. Members of Plymouth, Circular Congregational, and First Congregational Church of Savannah attended, as well as a few sisters from an AME Church who heard of the event.

As our day together began, I couldn't keep from smiling at the diversity of women gathered in that place. We started with Eve and worked our way through scripture to the "woman clothed with the sun" in Revelation 12, offering personal reflections and sharing our faith. We ended our time with a ritual of naming women who had strengthened us or who stood in need of our prayers, bound together by an anointing of joy and tears.

February took me to Tennessee. I enjoyed a heart-warming weekend at Pleasant Hill, reveling in the wisdom of dedicated folks with decades of experience as pastors, missionaries, and lay leaders. Two weeks later, I was at Fall Creek Falls State Park, leading a spiritual renewal retreat for members of Chattanooga's Pilgrim Congregational Church and Crossville United Christian Church. While Pilgrim is welcoming new members, Crossville is mourning an experience of worship that no longer continues.

Life is like this. Beginnings and endings, sorrows and joys – tenderly living out in a church family that is rich in a diversity of life experiences. I'm glad to be part of this family. I look forward to a visit to Alabama next month and to all the opportunities that lie ahead.

— Joyce Hollyday
Conference Associate

Inside . . .

- Annual Meeting info and reservations
- Conference news and opportunities
- Mission updates. . . and more!

Crisis Response Team Trains

Over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, more than 30 people from the Southeast and Florida Conferences gathered at Simpsonwood Retreat Center outside Atlanta to learn about a problem that has haunted the church for many years: clergy misconduct, particularly sexual harassment and abuse.



Pictured from left to right: James Myers, Peggy Muenstermann, Dorothy Gager (barely visible), Bob McMath, Jim Norris, Sandye Mullins, Jimmy Fields, Wade Washburn, Cheri Lovell, Tim Downs, Dick Braun, Holly Nelson, Dan Sack, Tim Morrison, Joan Harrison, Tom Baird, Marian Rogers, Trudy Braun. Photo courtesy of Molly Hill Folken of the Florida Conference.

The participants in the weekend have agreed to serve as members of the Conference's Crisis Response Team: groups of individuals – both clergy and lay – who will volunteer their time to investigate allegations of clergy sexual misconduct should they arise. Certain team members will also be assigned to provide support for both the alleged victim and for the pastor and his/her family, ensuring that no matter what the outcome of the investigation, all parties – including the church itself – will be treated with the concern that the church is called to show to all people.

"The Southeast Conference is deeply committed – both pastorally and in a spirit of justice – to addressing matters of sexual misconduct on the part of clergy, and to be present to all who are wounded by such behavior: victims, families and congregations," said Conference Minister Timothy Downs.

In addition to the guidelines for clergy conduct described in the *Manual on Ministry*, the Conference is developing a set of policies and procedures that will affirm standards for professional behavior, especially where women and children – the most frequent victims of clergy abuse – are concerned.

The Southeast Conference Crisis Response Team represents the culmination of several years of work by Rev. Holly Nelson of Nashville and Rev. James Myers of Birmingham. Rev. Dorothy Gager, also of Nashville, will serve as Crisis Response Coordinator for the Conference.

Conference Notes

The Christian Education Commission would like to increase the sharing of good ideas from CE programs around the conference. Are you enjoying a particular curriculum series? Have you found a source for extra teaching resources? What education activities do you have outside of Sunday morning? We'd love to hear from you — just contact Ginny Nixon through the Conference office, leaving your name, number and the best time to call.

The Conference is looking for a volunteer to serve as **Resource Librarian**, managing the Atlanta-based Conference Resource Center, a library of materials, curriculum, new books from Pilgrim Press, videos and more. Materials are loaned out to Conference churches on a mail-lending basis, and the Resource Librarian would need to commit four to eight hours each month maintaining the Center's lending activity. If you're interested, or know someone who might be, call the Conference Office for more information.

The Massachusetts and Connecticut conferences are looking for stories of connections to their states: teachers, clergy and others, particularly from AMA-related organizations. If you know of a story with a MA/CT connection, call the Conference Office.

The **1998 Southeast Women's Retreat** will be held November 20-22 at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama. The Planning Committee is developing a weekend filled with varied opportunities focusing on the local church, social justice, personal and spiritual development. Under the theme, *God's Amistad — An Invitation to the Table*, the retreat will emphasize the importance of gathering around God's table, where friendship and love are priorities. Joyce Hollyday will be the keynote speaker. Mark your calendar for this celebration!

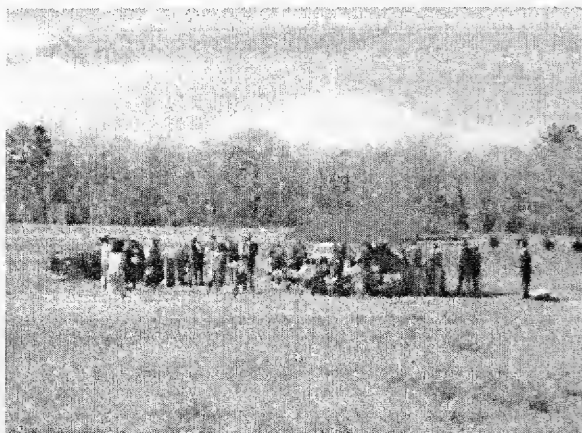
A **UCC Physicians Fellowship** is being established. If you're a physician and are interested in connecting with others in the church, please send your name, address, phone(s), fax and e-mail addresses to the Conference office.

The *Interfaith Gathering on Health Care* will be held in Memphis, May 3-5. If you're interested in attending, call the Conference office for details.

Rebuilding Burned Churches

In the early spring of 1997, Oak Grove CME Church in Perry, Georgia, was burned by arsonists.

For three months, the United Church of Christ had been working in partnership with the Congress for National Black Churches (CNBC), organizing a joint effort to rebuild Oak Grove. Delay followed delay — caused largely by unseasonably wet weather — but in mid-March, construction finally began. The United Church of Christ's first crew, from Pleasant Hill Community, began work the last week of March, joined by a faithful crew from the York Pennsylvania Association. Their first task: studding the building.



March 1, 1998 — Members of Oak Grove CME Church gather for a groundbreaking ceremony at their new building site on Elko Road. The site sits atop a green hill, with a commanding view of surrounding farms.

Crews originally scheduled to work on the Oak Grove rebuilding project in early January detoured to Birmingham, Alabama, where they worked on the Avenue M Church of God in Christ. Avenue M was burned along with a house next door. The arson caused the neighborhood to change — many older residents left out of fear. By helping to rebuild this church, our crews are

helping the neighborhood regain its stability. Rev. Rodney Franklin and First Congregational Church UCC of Birmingham graciously housed these unexpected helpers.

A few weeks are still open for crews who would like to work either at Avenue M in Birmingham or at Oak Grove in Perry, Georgia. If you have a group that's interested, call Anne Ariail at 912/742 4151 for more information.

— Anne Ariail
Disaster Relief Coordinator

An International Feast of Hope



Recently, several "great hours of sharing" took place when Rev. Eric Gass of the United Church Board for World Ministries paid a visit to the Southeast Conference. Rev. Gass, the Area Executive for the Southern Asia Office of UCBWM, came to remind us of the great work we are all involved in through our giving to One Great Hour of Sharing and the work of our overseas missionaries and partner churches.

The weekend of March 14-15, Eric toured several Southeast churches, meeting with members, showing slides and videos of the UCBWM's work, and sharing stories of hope from around the world: overcoming illiteracy in India, ministering to refugees in Thailand, feeding the hungry in Korea, and more. Well-fed with warm hospitality and good home-cooking, Eric gave us something more: an international feast of faith and hope!

— Rev. John Gill

FRIDAY

6:00p – 10:00p Registration
6:00p – 7:00p Dinner
7:30p – 8:00p Hymn Sing & Meditation
8:00p – 8:15p Nominating Committee Report
8:15p – 8:00p Hearings*
9:00p – 10:00p Fellowship

SATURDAY

7:00a – 8:00a Breakfast
8:30a – 9:30a Worship with Keynoter
9:30a – 12:00 Business Session
12:00 – 1:00p Lunch
1:30p – 2:45p Workshops – Session A
3:00p – 4:15p Workshops – Session B
4:15p – 6:00p Personal Time
6:00p – 7:00p Dinner
7:30p – 8:00p Recognitions, Special Music
8:00p – 10:00p Ice Cream Social

SUNDAY

7:00a – 8:00a Breakfast
8:00a – 10:00a Personal Time
8:45a – 8:30a Choir Rehearsal
10:00a – 11:30a Worship and Installations
12:00 Lunch

* Budget, Commissions, Restructure, Resolutions, Youth

SIMPSONWOOD RETREAT CENTER

Simpsonwood is located in Norcross, Georgia, in a tranquil, wooded setting just north of Atlanta. Each room has two double beds, one chair bed, a private bath and air conditioning. At Simpsonwood, rooms do not have televisions or phones in the rooms, but both are located in the hallways and lounges. Smoking is not permitted in any building.

Room and Meal Packages

Packages cover the entire Annual Meeting, from Friday dinner through Sunday lunch. Registration must be mailed by May 9 for the reduced rate (and for your choice of accommodation).

Double Room	\$170 per person
Child (ages 3-8)	\$30 per child in parent's room
Youth (ages 12-18)	\$60 per youth (4-6 per room)

Meals and meeting \$55/person (excl. breakfast)
Saturday only \$30/person (two meals)
Meals-only rates are the same for children and adults.

Handicapped accommodations are available (limited)

NAME _____

ADDRESS/CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONES (DAY/EVE) _____

CHURCH (CITY & NAME) _____

I'M ATTENDING AS A ... ☐ Delegate ☐ Youth ☐ Clergy ☐ Conference Board of Directors ☐ Visitor

TYPE OF ROOM DESIRED ☐ Double ☐ Meals/meeting only ☐ Saturday only

Double \$170/pp
Meals only \$55/pp
Saturday only \$30/pp

☐ I'm sharing a room with _____

☐ Please assign me a roommate

☐ Youth (4-6 youth per loft room) ☐ Children (Number _____)

CHILD CARE ☐ I will need child care for the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Make checks payable to Southeast Conference UCC - Annual Meeting. Mail to 756 W. Peachtree St., Atlanta GA 30308

\$ _____ Total amount due for this reservation

☐ Check enclosed ☐ This reservation is part of a group check. Group name _____

Offsite accommodations are available at the Marriott Hotel in Norcross. Call 770/263 8558 by May 28 for reservations. Smoking rooms are available at this hotel, and the rate per room is \$58/night (plus 12% tax) for single or double occupancy.

Please complete a separate form for each person attending all or part of the Annual Meeting

Directions to Simpsonwood Retreat Center

From I-285 in Atlanta

On the northeast side of Atlanta, take **Exit #23B** (Peachtree Industrial Blvd. North), and continue north 3.7 miles. At **Highway 141**, exit left (sign will read Hwy. 141 to 400 Cumming and Dahlonega). Hwy. 141 is also called Peachtree Parkway.

Go 2.8 miles north on Hwy. 141, then turn left on **E. Jones Bridge Road** (a BP station is on the right).

Go 1.4 miles on E. Jones Bridge, and turn left on **Jones Bridge Circle** (Simpson Elementary is on the right – you'll be in a neighborhood area).

After 1.2 miles on Jones Bridge Circle, the entrance to **Simpsonwood Retreat Center** will appear on your right. Follow the signs to Rollins Center and parking.

Shortcut from Greenville

From I-85 South, exit right at **Georgia Exit #40** (near Atlanta). Turn right onto **Pleasant Hill Road**. Once you've passed Gwinnett Mall on your right, travel 6.3 miles west to **Medlock Bridge Road** (Hwy. 141) and turn left at the traffic light.

Travel 2.9 miles south on Medlock Bridge and turn right onto **E. Jones Bridge Road**.

Go 1.4 miles on E. Jones Bridge, and turn left on **Jones Bridge Circle** (Simpson Elementary is on the right – you'll be in a neighborhood area).

After 1.2 miles on Jones Bridge Circle, the entrance to **Simpsonwood Retreat Center** will appear on your right. Follow the signs to Rollins Center and parking.

Clip and save these directions — the Annual Meeting schedule of events is on the reverse

1998 OCWM Contributions to date

as of March 31, 1998

Alabama — Tennessee Association

Birmingham, First Congregational	\$ 2,500.
Birmingham, Pilgrim Congregational UCC	1,626.
Chattanooga, Pilgrim Congregational UCC	2,496.
Crossville, Grace Community UCC	600.
Crossville, United Christian Church UCWF	150.
Deer Lodge Congregational UCC	300.
Fairfield Glade Community Church	950.
Garden City Congregational Christian	125.
Montgomery, Community Congregational UCC	2,850.
Nashville, First United Church of Christ	1250.
Nashville, Howard Congregational UCC	100.
Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC	4,758.
United Church of Huntsville	1,950.
TOTAL ALA-TENN	\$ 19,655.

South Alabama — Northwest Florida Association

Brantley, Liberty Congregational	\$ 100.
TOTAL SAL-NWFL	\$ 100.

Georgia — South Carolina Association

Atlanta, Central Congregational UCC	\$ 7,900.
Atlanta, Rush Memorial Congregational UCC	108.
Charleston, Circular Congregational UCC	1,000.
Jonesboro/Hampton, Trinity UCC	240.
Marietta, Pilgrimage UCC	1,900.
TOTAL GA-SC	\$ 11,148.

East Alabama — West Georgia Association

Lanett Congregational Christian UCC	\$ 620.
Pine Mountain, Oak Grove Congreg. Christian	1,140.
Roanoke, New Hope Congregational Christian	570.
Roanoke, North Main Congregational Christian	190.
Wadley, Corinth Christian	119.
Woodbury, Jones Chapel United Congreg. Chr.	622.
TOTAL EAL-WGA	\$ 3,261.

Stewards: Called as Partners

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference



June 12-14

**Simpsonwood Conference Center
Atlanta, Georgia**

WORKSHOPS

Partners Across the Globe

with John Gill

The work of the United Church Board
for World Ministries

Partners Across the Nation

presenter to be announced

The work of the United Church Board
for Homeland Ministries

Strengthen Your Congregation

with Barbara Everett

Strengthening your congregation
through planned and special giving

Protecting Your Church

Marie Loutoo

Save money and promote mission
through the UCC Insurance Board

Consecrating Stewards

with Tim Morrison

Strengthening your church in
stewardship through this program

Clergy, Money and Faith

with William Green

Engaging a challenging issue, a
challenging conversation

The Widows' Might

with Joyce Hollyday

Discover the spiritual power of simplicity
and giving

Doing Theology

with Dick Sales

Previewing an extensive education
program for licensed ministers

Renew Your Church!

with John Mingus

Find out about participating in the
Covenant for Renewal

Becoming Open & Affirming

with Robert Goodyear

How your church can become an Open
& Affirming congregation

Affirming Faith

Henry Hobson

Learn how new confirmation materials
introduce teens and adults to the UCC

The Cornerstone Fund of the UCC

with Cheri Lovell

Investing from the heart,
Building for the future

Additional workshops will be available

Board Highlights

The Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference met on January 9, and took the following actions:

- Received with regret the resignations of Nancy Donny and Dan Rosemergy from Board membership
- Elected Budd Friend-Jones to the Chair of the Commission on Church and Ministry, and Milton Hurst to the Chair of the Commission on Church Development and Evangelism
- Appointed Arthur Domby of Atlanta as Conference attorney
- Authorized establishment of a Scholarship Committee
- Increased the Conference contribution to National OCWM to a total of \$20,000 for 1998
- Acted to transfer \$5,000 from the Visions '91 Campaign, plus up to \$2,000 from the remaining balance at the end of 1998, to the work of the Allen Retreat Center
- Received a report that the Conference is working with the Board for Homeland Ministries to explore the feasibility of an African-American church start in Atlanta
- Received a report that no more funding is being provided to Covenant Church in Columbia, SC

SUBMITTING RESOLUTIONS

Proposed resolutions to be considered by the Board of Directors for the Annual Meeting may be submitted *in writing* to the Conference Office, to the attention of Tim Downs and Annie Neal.

Deadline for receipt: May 1

DISPLAY YOUR WARES

Have crafts, books, bumper stickers or buttons you'd like to display or sell at the Annual Meeting? Space is available for "boutique" and informational tables — just call Gerry Hudson in the Conference Office to request a reservation.

CONFERENCE OFFICE
800/807 1993

Nominating Report

The following individuals have been nominated to the Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference. Officers will be elected at the Annual Meeting.

MODERATOR	Donald Harmon	EAL-WGA
VICE MODERATOR	Steve Parker	GA-SC
SECRETARY	Don Hewett	ALA-TN
TREASURER	Dave Speno	GA-SC
PAST MODERATOR	Dr. Annie Neal	ALA-TN

AT LARGE	Kimberly Hunt	'00	ALA-TN
	TBA	'00	

COMMISSION ON...

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	Kristi Denham	'00	GA-SC
CHURCH DEV. & EVANG.	Pat Kask	'00	GA-SC
CHURCH & MINISTRY	Marian Rogers	'00	ALA-TN
SOCIAL JUSTICE	Carol Jean Miller	'00	GA-SC
STEWARDSHIP & OCWM	Marvin Mangham	'00	GA-SC
WOMEN IN CHURCH & SOC.	Kathryn Robinson	'00	GA-SC

1997 Financial Report

1997 was a year in which the Southeast Conference was blessed by increased income from churches, associations, interest income, and support from the Board for Homeland Ministries. Overall income was up over 1996 by \$20,685. Income exceeded expenses by \$9,062. Expenses increased over 1996 by \$12,845 which included increased giving to National OCWM of \$17,500 versus \$15,000 in 1996, and the addition of two Conference Associates and their related expenses.

During 1997 the Conference updated its computer and telephone systems, added the monthly *Southeast Perspective*, and reorganized the *Southeast News*. These efforts are all intended to bring the staff and resources of the Southeast Conference closer to you. Two committees have been formed, the Scholarship Committee and the Grants Committee, to distribute funds for educational purposes and grants from Visions '91 and the Make A Difference campaigns.

The Finance Committee will be presenting to you at the Annual Meeting a revised 1998 and proposed 1999 budget. These budgets will be more in line with the actual figures that have occurred over the past three years. This change we hope will make the budget process more realistic so when the Conference requests increases they will more nearly track actual numbers. A more complete and detailed review of 1997 and the revised and proposed budgets will be in a special annual report you will be receiving prior to the Annual Meeting in June. The Finance Committee has worked hard this past year and looks forward to a rewarding 1998 for the Southeast Conference.

— David P. Speno
Chair

A Movie, an Event, a Part of Our Heritage

Reflections on the Amistad

The Academy Award nominations largely ignored Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, but that doesn't mean you should. This movie is beautiful to watch (it did get nominations for cinematography, costume, and dramatic musical score), and it tells the story of an event that was influential in the development of the mission and abolitionist commitment of the 19th century Congregational church.

The movie follows closely the actual events surrounding the African captives, members of the Mendi tribe, who rebelled against brutal treatment, were imprisoned for nearly two years while the American courts decided their fate, then returned to Africa as free persons. What the movie does not present is the critical role played by committed church people who gave of themselves to oppose one of the inhuman byproducts of the system of slavery, the slave trade. The brief scene of persons praying in the snow is an injustice to the countless people who added hard work and financial resources to their prayers to make sure that these Africans would not languish forgotten in their New England jail.

Before the story of the Mendi captives personalized the atrocities that were a part of the institution of slavery, abolition was a vaguely held belief by many, but a cause for only a few. After the jailing of the Mendi, the Amistad Committee formed to support their defense and to provide physical and moral support for the captives. This committee was supported by the churches in the area, including one congregation of free blacks. As the case dragged on, more and more people came to realize that the only way to stop injustices like this one was to abolish slavery altogether. After the Supreme Court freed the Mendi prisoners, it was the Amistad Committee that continued to raise funds to buy passage for their return to Africa.

Within a few years, the Amistad Committee joined with three other groups to form the American Missionary Association, a group dedicated to spreading the message of God's love to all parts of the world. After the Civil War, the AMA founded dozens of educational institutions in the South, including the historically black colleges of which we in the Southeast Conference are so proud. And it was the AMA and people educated by AMA schools that founded many of our churches in the Southeast. As we move into the 21st century, the AMA continues to work within our Board for Homeland Ministries for love, justice and human freedom in God's world.

In 1939, 100 years after the revolt on the Amistad, murals depicting the incident were created in the library of Talledega College, an AMA school in Talledega, Alabama. These powerful paintings, created when blacks were still consigned by Jim Crow laws to second class citizenship, are worth a visit to this town near Birmingham.

Again, I highly recommend the movie *Amistad*. It is well acted, and it honors the courage, dignity and patience of the Mendi captives as well as the commitment of their defenders. But I also recommend the United Church Press video, *I Remember the Amistad*, produced on the 150th anniversary of the incident and available at the Conference Office. This film provides the added dimension of the importance of the commitment of the organized church in achieving justice.

With the violence of the first part of the movie, *Amistad* is rated R. While every United Church youth should know this heroic story and our church's role in supporting the captives, families will want to determine how much of the movie is appropriate for their teens.

—Ginny Nixon

The Nigerian Resolution

At the 1997 General Synod, a resolution passed calling on the United States to boycott Nigerian oil – many of us wondered why. Over the weekend of March 13-15, a group of us learned the answer.

In 1993, Nigeria held long-awaited general elections – but while Chief Abiola clearly won, the ruling military leader General Abacha declared the election null and void. When Abiola objected, he was jailed – and he remains imprisoned to this day. His wife was killed for calling for his release, and hundreds of people from the Nigerian delta have been detained.

Why? For those who remember Angola, the answer is familiar: Shell Oil. Shell has devastated the delta of Nigeria with oil wells and flame-outs. And part of its profits go into the pockets of General Abacha.

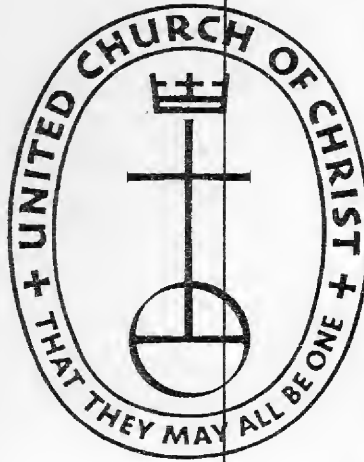
The Nigerian poet, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was executed for demanding the rights of the delta people, along with eight other Ngoni activists. Environmental degradation wrought not only by Shell, but also by Mobil and Chevron (though to a lesser degree), has transformed the delta from a place of great life and harvests to a dismal swamp.

Detention without trial, trials without juries, military murders – we have all heard this before. But it was South Africa, gold and diamonds. Now it is happening daily in Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa.

At our Annual Meeting in June, we will ask you to adopt a Nigerian detainee. Every letter you send on behalf of your detainee will be for one purpose: sanctions in lieu of free elections.

This black-on-black violence is no less horrific than what occurred in South Africa during apartheid. The very land of Nigeria cries out for justice.

— Dick Sales
Conference Associate



News from the Marshall Islands

Jan and Karl Whiteman, our missionaries in the Pacific Islands, survived a typhoon that hit their area several months ago – though without power and water for a number of days, they came through with very little damage. The Theological College of the Marshall Islands sustained significant damage, but thanks to a \$4,000 gift from One Great Hour of Sharing, repair began soon after the storm had passed. The Whitemans love to hear from folks in the Southeast. Their e-mail address is kwjwuucc@ntamar.com.

Calendar of Prayer

- MAY 3** **St. John's United Church of Christ, Cullman AL**
– that our witness may be strong for truth
- MAY 10** **The American Missionary Association**
– thanks be to God for the AMA and the churches founded by that great institution
- MAY 17** **First Congregational Church, Montgomery AL**
– rebuilding from the ashes
- MAY 24** **Pilgrimage United Church of Christ, Marietta GA**
– enriching worship and service
- MAY 31** **Our missionaries Jan & Karl Whiteman**
– and their ministries in the Marshall Island
- JUNE 7** **The Southeast Conference Annual Meeting**
– preparations and planning for next weekend
- JUNE 14** **Southeast Conference pastors**
– those leading services at home during the Annual Meeting
- JUNE 21** **Churches in the Southeast Conference**
– with membership under 50 members
- JUNE 28** **Midway Congregational, First Congregational in Savannah, Plymouth Congregational and Circular Congregational in Charleston, Bethany Congregational in Thomasville and Evergreen Congregational in Beachton**
– that our churches “at the edges” of the Conference may feel part of our fellowship

Annual Meeting Schedule and Information Inside!

**Southeast Conference
of the
United Church of Christ
756 W. Peachtree Street
Atlanta, GA 30308**

